

MARSHALL ISLANDS

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of significant societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country is an archipelago with an area of 70 square miles and a population of 53,200. Major religious groups include the United Church of Christ (formerly Congregational), with 51.5 percent of the population; the Assemblies of God, 24.2 percent; the Roman Catholic Church, 8.4 percent; and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), 8.3 percent. Other groups include Bukot Non Jesus (also known as Assembly of God Part Two), Baptist, Seventh-day Adventists, Full Gospel, and the Bahai Faith. The Jehovah's Witnesses are believed to have a few hundred practitioners, Jews fewer than 20, and Ahmadiyya Muslims fewer than 10.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Please refer to Appendix C in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for the status of the government's acceptance of international legal standards <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/appendices/index.htm>.

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally enforced these protections.

There is no official state religion, but Christianity is the dominant social and cultural influence. Governmental and social functions typically begin and end with an interdenominational Christian prayer delivered by an ordained minister or other church official.

There are no criteria for registering religious groups, nor are there consequences for not registering.

There is no religious education in public schools and no opening or closing prayers during the school day. However, most extracurricular school events begin and end with an interdenominational Christian prayer.

The government observes the following religious holidays as national holidays: Good Friday, Gospel Day, and Christmas.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally respected religious freedom in law and in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom by the government during the reporting period.

There were no reports of abuses, including religious prisoners or detainees, in the country.

Section III. Status of Societal Actions Affecting Enjoyment of Religious Freedom

There were no reports of significant societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The embassy regularly meets with local church leaders and foreign missionaries.